GOSSIP OF THE DRAMA FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

The Actor-Manager.

A Revival of an Old Controversy as to His Value—Irving, Mansfield, and Sothern as Examples.

London is again agitated over the perennial question of the value or otherwise of the actor-manager system. With so conspicuous an example as Henry Irving on the affirmative side of the proposition there yet remain those who would contend that the results where the proprietor is both actor and manager are not always good.

Doubtless some abuses of privileges have at times resulted in such cases, for with the best intentions in the world the actor is after all—first and foremost—the actor, with the actor's liking for the center of the stage and "fat parts." But to controvert this influence, he is apt to be also the man of artistic perceptions not wholly influenced by commercial interests.

In this country E. H. Sothern—in effect an actor-manager, since his productions are practically of his own making—and Richard Mansfield, come to mind as conspicuous examples. Their influence certainly calls for no great regret.

In connection with this subject the "London Stage" has this to say:

"Actor-managers, in common with other persons, are only human. No doubt they have their faults, and they themselves would be the last to say that, in management, they have a monopoly of the virtues. But, without any question, the best and most vital work for the English stage has been done by the actor-manager, from Garrick's time to our own.

"Yet it is freely charged in this correspondence that they subordinate every interest to their personal aggrandizement. They are charged with not allowing dramatists to write plays, only parts for them. They are charged with refusing to entertain plays unless the authors are supported by financial syndicates or rich 'backers.' They are charged with reducing the female element in plays, and bringing about a complete dearth of leading actresses. They are charged—this by the 'Daily Mail' on its own authority—with degrading the accessory members of their companies. They are charged with coercing the critics, who, in their whispering humbleness, have set up the actor-manager at the expense of the drama and the stage at large.

Controverted by Experience.

"We see that Beerbohm Tree has noticed these charges indirectly by stating that he will give £1,000 to Guy's Hospital if it can be proved that the arrangements at his theaters have ever been dictated by monetary payments of the kind suggested. Among the multitude of managers there are some who abuse their positions. It is a platitude—a disagreeable platitude—that there are black sheep in every fold. But it is comically unjust to indict the whole system of actor-management for individual shortcomings—for vanity, or worse—here or there.

"Even if he were unfairly minded, the average actor-manager could not afford, as things are, to bring everything down to a mere greedy consideration of his own acting share. Nobody knows better than he that the one-part performance has, in ordinary circumstances, not the remotest chance of gaining the support of playgoers. Empty houses supply a very rapid cure for this theory of the whole duty of management. An actor-manager likes naturally to play a big part when he can get it, just as any other artist rejoices in a subject that can give rein to his ambitions. But drama is not suffering just now—nor is acting suffering in its ensemble—because actor-managers insist on the one-part play and the exaltation of it by the critics. And were that so, would there not be a speedy corrective in the existence of the non-actor-managers?"

Acting and Art.

The same writer, discussing the much-mooted question, "Is Acting an Art?" says:

"Lovers of the obvious and the futile seem to be, like the poor, always with us. Various correspondents of the 'Daily Mail' have been exercising their easily deluded wits over the long disposed of question whether acting is an art, and, if so, what place it occupies in the hierarchy of the arts. Of course, if acting is not art, it is difficult to say what it is. Were acting the mere projection of crude nature on the stage all would have it within their means to be actors. If, on the other hand, acting were simply a mechanical process, Irvings and Bernhardts might be turned out as from an automatic box. But, in point of fact, acting is that subtle reduction of gift to skilled application which is art in the truest sense.

"The root meaning of art is to fit, to join; and an art is liberal or mechanical to the extent to which it requires or does not require talent or genius. Carpentry is largely a mechanical art, sculpture or architecture a liberal or fine art.

"It is strange that anyone of any ordinary education should lack the small amount of perception that defines art in these relations. Almost as strange is the reluctance of some minds, while admitting acting to be an art, frankly to give it a place in the company of the arts.

Creative Versus Interpretative Faculties.

"It is urged that acting is only an art in a limited sense—that it is not a creative art, only at the best an interpretative art.

"Metaphysicians are dubious whether any art is creative. They do not like the word, for the artist does but work up the old materials, giving them the color and the impress which belong to his peculiar talent and skill. That the actor adds something to a role beyond the mere interpretation and bodying forth of the dramatist's ideas is shown by the fact that no two actors present a particular character with identical effect. If proof were wanting—and needless to say it is not—there is an apt instance in the Paula Tanqueray of Mme. Jane Hading, which has very little in common with the original exposition of the part by Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

"However, all this would-be placing and ticketing of the arts is a pettifogging business. Each art has its excelling beauties. Lower in one thing, it is higher in another."

"Mrs. Wiggs" on the Stage.

Plans of the Liebler Company and Trials of the Owners.

The following is provided The Times by the press agent for the Liebler Company:

If the amazing demand in amateur circles for stage presentation of some kind, almost any kind, in fact, of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," and her protege "Lovey Mary," is to be regarded as estimating the popularity of the proposed bona fide dramatization of Mrs. Annie Hegan Rice's two delightful stories, then a brilliant future certainly awaits Mrs. Anne Crawford Flexner's work—for it is she, the friend, comrade, and fellow-citizen of the distinguished authoress, Mrs. Annie Hegan Rice, of Louisville, Ky., to whom has been delegated the task, and her work, so far as completed, gives promise of being wholly delightful and thoroughly satisfactory.

No sooner was the announcement of the proposed dramatization made public than the office of Liebler & Co., who had purchased of Mrs. Rice the dramatic rights of the books named, was flooded with personal applications and written requests from the four points of the compass, and from nearly every State in the Union, for permission to give amateur presentations of newly-made dramatizations of "Mrs. Wiggs"—dramatizations without authority or excuse, and assuming all sorts of shapes.

Some of these undertakings went no further than to propose to give "readings" from the books, but from this point the propositions expanded, until they embraced everything which, in the judgment of the amateur author, was to be looked for, or expected, in a complete play. They came from schools, from churches, from societies, from individuals and, almost without exception, they made their plea "for sweet charitr's sake."

Many Requests of Many Kinds.

The form which some of these requests assumed made them difficult to refuse. For instance, one from an interior town in Pennsylvania began:

"Mrs. Blank begs to draw Mr. Tyler's attention to the inclosed correspondence, and begs that he will grant the request of the Matrons' Auxiliary of the Blank Hospital, and thus insure another year's free bed for the town's suffering poor and sick," etc., etc.

This request came accompanied by a letter from Mrs. Rice, to whom the appeal had first been made, and who had very properly referred the writer to the firm who had paid money for the rights which others were so anxious to secure without money and without price.

Another came from St. Joseph, Mo., which performance, as the writer explained in her letter, was "merely intended as a parlor play," to be given by amateurs, "for the benefit of one of our churches." The play had already been in rehearsal for ten days, as the writer explained, and there was an intimation also, that they proposed to continue them, until they were compelled by law to cease.

Another self-confessed transgressor was a minister living up in Nova Scotia, who explained, "we have a nice little Sunday school house, which we call the Parish House, and once or twice a year some of our young people get up an amateur entertainment. I am fond of that sort of thing," frankly acknowledged the liberal-minded minister, "and have arranged a stage and painted scenery myself for it. I always try to get them to have something good, rather than the trash which many desire, and I believe in educating and elevating people's tastes, and so holding, I thought of dear old Mrs. Wiggs, and concluded I could put it into shape, and make a very pretty, effective, and pleasing evening's entertainment out of it."

There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the knowledge that the good old clergyman should wind up his epistle with an ecstatic description of the excellent bit of stage carpentering he had done, and generously offering to give the New York manager the benefit of his ideas and inventions. Rather queer combination that, parson, playwright, and player, all in one.

Another request comes from the "Young People's Christian Union," of Waltham, Mass., but this is courteously written, and there is plainly evident a due regard for the proprieties and the law. The "Church Home League" of Buffalo has "a band of young people" who give entertainments for the benefit of the Church Home Orphanage, and here again the thoughtful mind naturally turned to "Mrs. Wiggs" and "Lovey Mary."

All Were Refused.

So it goes throughout a long list which Liebler & Co. have now on file, and the movements of those connected therewith, by the way, they are just now keeping under close surveillance. Of course, the request had to be denied in all cases, for this is a sort of an infringement that has to be checked, and checked right in the start, for otherwise one is apt to have trouble on hand, and that of a character which is as tenacious and persistent as was Sinbad's "Old Man of the Sea." Hence it is that Liebler & Co. have instructed their attorneys, Messrs. Howe & Hummel, to take summary action whenever and wherever it may be necessary to maintain the rights they have purchased, and these attorneys have already begun work in accordance with their instructions.

If this extraordinary and evidently manifest public disposition toward Mrs. Wiggs and the Cabbage Patch, and Lovey Mary, and Mis' Hazy, and Mr. Stubbins, "whom the gods destroy," and

MABEL TALIAFERRO.

MRS. MADGE CARR COOK.

WILL T. HODGE.

MEMBERS OF THE LIEBLER CAST FOR "MRS. WIGGS."

Peg-Leg Chris, and the rest of Mrs Rice's famous characters, is any indication of the popularity of the book and the play, then a lively season should certainly await Mrs. Wiggs.

The play, it is said, retains all the atmosphere of the book, and adds no inconsiderable fresh interest, Mrs. Rice contributing her own personal aid and assistance to that end. George C. Tyler has cast the play with all the care, discretion, and judgment of which he is capable, and those who know Mr. Tyler and understand his capacity will comprehend that that means a great deal.

A Notable Company.

For Mrs. Wiggs he has engaged Mrs. Madge Carr Cook, whose recent creations with the Amelia Bingham productions have attracted so much attention. She should be, and doubtless will be, the ideal Mrs. Wiggs.

Mabel Taliaferro will impersonate Lovey Mary, another characterization that will commend itself, by the mere suggestion. It is doubtful whether a better selection could be made for the part. Certainly those who are familiar with the character as Mrs. Rice has portrayed her, and as Mrs. Flexner under Mrs. Rice's guidance has presented her, will entertain no doubt whatever of this fact.

Can the reader recall the Freeman Whitmarsh, the painter, of the original "Sag Harbor" company—the man who made the great "hit" of the play, by general confession? The original Freeman Whitmarsh was Will T. Hodge, and he it is who has been assigned to the indescribably humorous role of Mr. Stubbins, the would-be husband of Mis' Hazy, and the individual "whom the gods would destroy." If Will Hodge doesn't "eat up" the role, we shall be amazed.

Hodge has grown since Mr. Herne first picked him out for the village painter in "Sag Harbor," and he commands a salary now that is a long way in advance of his youthful hopes and ambitions.

Helen Lowell, the original Polly Love in "The Christian," and one of the best women in her peculiar line of work on the New York stage, will play Mis' Hazy. Taylor Granville, who made such a hit in "The Royal Box," and more recently as the jockey in "The Suburban," will play the peg-legged boy, Chris Hazy, who is "handy on his feet."

On these lines the entire cast will be made up.

The bookings at Liebler & Co.'s office show that the play will have its presentation at Macauley's Theater, Louisville, Ky.—the home of Mrs. Wiggs and the Cabbage Patch—on Monday, October 5, where the engagement is for a week, and will go from there direct to the Olympic Theater, St. Louis. The larger cities of the West will be visited during the six weeks prior to January 1, when it will go into Chicago to test its fortunes before a metropolitan audience in one of the leading theaters of the Windy City. It will then wend its way eastward, playing only the larger cities, and seek New York time during the early spring months.

Two Trying Moments.

Edward Harrigan and Henry Miller Both Suffered Chills.

The most trying moment in Edward Harrigan's career occurred in New Orleans soon after the war, according to a writer in "Everybody's Magazine." He had gone South with his company, and, yielding somewhat anxiously to popular request, put on "The Blue and the Gray." The play had been a success up North, but down South, with the air still full of the bitterness of the war, it was a dangerous experiment. Tony Hart was to represent the Confederate gray, so he hunted up a uniform of the Louisiana Tigers, and when he came marching on, young, stalwart, handsome, the typical soldier boy in the beloved uniform, the house, men and women, cheered and shouted and cried for all their heroes embodied in this boy.

Harrigan, standing in the wings in his Northern blue, waiting to go on, had just one thought—"They'll kill me!" Then he stepped out, the embodiment of the enemy, and a cold, dead silence fell upon the house. Not a hand moved for him. The audience was tense with emotion, and there was only an instant to act, if the play was to be saved. Harrigan, big, kindly, good-looking, came swiftly down to the front and stepped over the footlight gutter, leaning down to them. "For the love of God, won't you give the Yankee a hand?" he exclaimed. At once the house was caught, and all the pent-up feeling turned the right way. There was a yell of applause.

The most trying moment in Henry Miller's professional life happened out in a Western town, where he had just opened in "The Squire." When the curtain fell on the first act there was a tremendous burst of applause from the house. The enthusiasm was unexpected so early in the evening, but as the clapping and shouting continued, the company was lined up in a gratified row and the curtain was raised.

And then it was seen that the house was not looking at the stage at all, but at a young couple who had just appeared in one of the boxes, and who also were responding with smiles and bows to the ovation. It was a sickly moment. There was nothing to do but stand there in a foolish row till at last the curtain came down again, and it seemed an eternity. The young couple, it proved, had been married that day in the window of a local dry goods store, receiving in return various practical gifts and a box at the theater, and the house was offering its congratulations.

Strikers Confuse Plans.

Mansfield, Sothern, and Other Stars Now "Up in the Air."

New York dispatches indicate that, although it is difficult to get anybody connected with one of the theaters now in process of construction to admit that the building will not be completed in ample time to open on the advertised date, it is nevertheless true there is great uneasiness among managers on account of the strike of the building trades. If the new theaters fail of completion the plans of several distinguished actors and actresses—among them Richard Mansfield, E. H. Sothern, and Ethel Barrymore—will be seriously disarranged.

Oscar Hammerstein, who is in a position to know of most matters theatrical, and Alf Hayman, Charles Frohman's general manager, give it as their opinion that, judging from the present outlook, none of the playhouses will open on the date promised on the flaring billboards throughout the city.

Mr. Hammerstein, when asked about his own theater, the Drury Lane, and about his opinion in regard to the probable opening of the others, said:

"Though I can't speak from authority about any house but my own, I am decidedly of the opinion that none of the new theaters is likely to open until the first of January. Work is apt to be stopped at any time, and when it will be resumed is a matter over which the owners of the new theaters have about as much control as helpless children. As far as the Drury Lane is concerned, it will not be open until January 1 at the earliest, and perhaps not until late in the spring."

May Delay Mansfield.

Richard Mansfield is billed to open in the Lyric Theater early in October, and the contract date for the completion of the building is a month or two earlier. The representative of the Shuberts is confident, apparently, that there will be no delay in the opening. The contractor himself, however, while sure of finishing if he can get labor, is visibly afraid of the fluctuations in the supply of workmen. One day during the week he was standing in front of the theater in Forty-third Street, looking intently at the workmen. Asked about the probability of completing the work on time, he said:

"You can't tell about the workmen that will turn up. If the strike is settled permanently and all the men come back the theater will be finished a long way ahead of time. But it is all so uncertain that it is impossible to count on anything. The whole thing depends on the strike situation."

The part of the Lyric fronting on Forty-second Street will certainly be finished in a short time, for there is very little more to be done there. This section, going up several stories above the theater proper, is to be used for all the offices of the Shuberts, and they expect to move in within a month. The theater proper fronts on Forty-third Street, and it is there that the crowds of Mansfield worshipers will pour in—if the building is finished. The street wall above the large entrance already has the glossy look of completion, but, as Mr. Hammerstein says about theaters in general, "the outside of a theater is not the whole thing." The inside of this building, however, is well on the way, for the balcony, even including the seats, is practically complete. The very nearness to the end in itself is what exasperates the contractor of any of the new theaters. When it is a question of only a few more days and he finds some morning that not a single man has turned up then it is that his patience is at an end.

As said before, Mr. Hammerstein does not expect the Drury Lane to be finished at any early date. For seven consecutive weeks not very long ago work was at a standstill on account of the ironworkers' strike. Mr. Hammerstein says he found it was of no use to worry; to get a theater building when the builders won't build is a task too great for even a twentieth century theater manager.

In Daniel Frohman's new building, the Lyceum, in West Forty-fifth Street, E. H. Sothern is slated to open September 21, in Justin H. McCarthy's play, "The Proud Prince." This theater has been fortunate in the steadiness of work, and has progressed almost without interruption since its start. Except the New Amsterdam in West Forty-second Street, it is the only one that has escaped the results of the strike. The tall white columns over the entrance are all finished, and work on the inside is going on rapidly.

The recent labor disputes have affected none of the new playhouses more strongly than the Hudson, of which Henry B. Harris is manager, and the delay in this case has been peculiarly exasperating because so very little work is needed entirely to finish the structure. A day or two ago, in speaking of the troubles and delays resulting from the failure of capital and labor to agree, Mr. Harrris said in regard to the opening of the Hudson in the fall:

"We were almost at the point where we would be independent of the workmen who are being called out every few days, when 157 plasterers quit and left us helpless. Two more weeks, more or less, and the building itself would have been done, and the drapers and interior decorators, who are not among the striking forces, could have gone in and completed everything."

Two Large Theaters.

The Hudson, as long as the work kept up, remained some way ahead of the other theaters. All the draperies, furnishings, stage fixtures, and countless other interior necessaries and ornaments were prepared while the building was going on and are ready to be moved in as soon as the plastering is done. Ethel Barrymore is scheduled to open at the Hudson late in September. Unless the house is ready, Mr. Harris says, some other place will probably have to be found for her.

Everything points to the prompt completion of the enormous New Amsterdam Theater now being constructed by the Fuller Company for Klaw & Erlanger on the block bounded by Forty-second and Forty-third Streets, Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Owing to the agreement made between the Fuller company and the building trades the hammers and drills have not been idle an instant. The New Amsterdam is to be one of the largest theaters in the world; one of the items entered on the purchase side of the account is 2,000 tons of steel, with everything else in proportion.

One of the most interesting phases of the situation to theatrical folk is the probability of stars, such as Mansfield and Miss Barrymore, being without a stage when the time for their appearance rolls around. Of course, such a thing may never happen, since, in the case of the house being unfinished, the managers will not leave any steps untaken to secure places for very prominent figures.

The general situation, to say the least, is one of extreme uneasiness for the managers. They recognize their helplessness where the inclination of the workmen and the power of the walking delegates are concerned. All they can do is to wait.

Her First Open-Air Theater.

England's Genius, Slow to Awaken, Now Builds on Large Scale.

The first open-air theater in the United Kingdom has just been opened at Port Sunlight, in Lancashire, by the mayor of Bolton. The permanent part of the building contains a stage fifty feet wide by thirty-five feet deep, with dressing rooms and greenrooms on one side, and rooms for a band, stores, carpenters, and for the painting and storing of scenery on the other. Large doors for the admission of scenery occupy the back of the stage, which is framed toward the front by a fine proscenium arch of terra-cotta twenty-four feet wide and twenty feet high, fitted with a revolving steel curtain. In front of this is the orchestra inclosure.

The building is constructed of Ruabon red bricks, and is in the classic style, with proscenium cornices, columns, arches, niches, and other designs of salmon-colored terra-cotta, richly molded and modeled. The space inclosed in the great pediment is filled with a handsome bas-relief in terra-cotta, the subject being the "Aurora," and the design an adaption of Guido Reni's fresco in Rome. The auditorium is 158 feet, 6 inches long, by 95 feet wide, and is formed of concrete, with a large center area rising gradually to the back, and with stepped galleries all around, the end being octagonal.

This vast area will be covered with benches, which will seat nearly 3,000 people. The audience will be sheltered from the weather and sun by a steel-framed roof, carried upon iron columns, over which will be stretched strong waterproof canvas, the sides being closed in with the same material.

A la Quaint Japan.

R. L. Beecher's Ballad of Western Thought and Eastern Speech.

Some of Robert Livingston Beecher's lyrics, written for the new Japanese opera "Otoyo," now being sung on the Madison Square Garden roof, are quaint and amusing. This is taken from the finale of the first act:

Men—
Ten Yen must die!

Girls—
He must die—suicide—suicide!
What a fall for his pride!
Suicide!

Ten Yen—
We pity you, and now before you flutter
Out of the light and into darkness utter,
Something we've got to say, and we must do it.
You're going far away,
Away from here.
Journeys must end and there's but one end to it.
You're going far away—
But where? Oh, where?

Hail! hail! to the slowly dying!
He's a corpse we'll all admire.
He's fat enough for frying—
Won't he squirm when he is on the fire?
Hail! hail! to the dear departed!
When he's in a warmer spot
We'll all be broken hearted!
He's a brick, but fireproof he is not!

Ten Yen—
You touch me, friends, with your applause
And sorrow at my removal.
I've a habit of returning home quite late.
Are you on?
I am often kept by pressing cares of state.
Are you on?

I've a wife who drives me crazy.
As a morning frost she's daisy,
And on one point I'm quite hazy—
Is she on?

Many motormen you meet, both short and tall.
Are you on?
Who can never seem to notice you at all.
Are you on?
When the steps seem greased with butter,
And you flounder in the gutter,
The conductor's sure to mutter—
"Are you on?"

There's a lot of jealous folk upon the stage.
Are you on?
Can't you hear them in the wings there, fume and rage?
Are you on?
They're all saying, "Ain't he horrid?"
"That high voice and that low forehead!"
"Don't he look like——" (something torrid!)
Are you on?

They run off! I run on! Then you know there's some one on!
But those lobsters never do know when they meet a paragon!
They're all green-eyed, but no wonder!
Here I'm stealing all their thunder!
They all rap me
'Cause you clap me!
Are you on?

I always knew I and my laws
Had met with your approval.

Brace up, old sport, and die dead game;
We all must kick the bucket!
The man whose science made this wreck
Eats wireless macaroni.
If I had that wireless dago's neck,
There'd be no more Marconi.

Otoyo—
O father mine! what can I do to free you from this peril?

Ten Yen—
Oh, don't be alarmed over that, my dear;
I've as many lives yet as a cat, my dear.
I'll bluff the Mikado and kick very hard-o
Before I'm thoroughly dead.

I can bribe without giving offense, my dear,
For I have a few dollars and cents, my dear.
And no matter what's said, I'm officially dead,
Tho' I'm semi-officially here!

This topical song appears in the second act:

I'm a sport, and with all games of chance I'm there.
Are you on?
All my games, of course, you know, are strictly fair.
Are you on?
With the shells, roulette, and poker,
I'm a jolly, all-round joker;
I can skin a Wall Street broker—
Are you on?

Are you on? Are you on?
To my little game of con?
I am out for all the dough
That I can get my hands upon.
I'm as honest as they make 'em.
But my sleeves—I never shake 'em.
Extra aces show no traces!
Are you on?

Hope and His Heroines.

Grace Kimball Depicts Him as a Pronounced Enthusiast.

Apropos of the marriage last Wednesday of Anthony Hope, an interesting exposition of the author's ideals in the way of a stage heroine is supplied by Miss Grace Kimball, who was the original Princess Flavia in this country in the production of "The Prisoner of Zenda," by Mr. Sothern.

Miss Kimball, by the way, had almost completed arrangements to appear as another Hope heroine this coming season in a dramatization of "The Indiscretion of the Duchess," but owing to Mr. Hope's disinclination to permit the dramatist to transform the duchess from a married woman into a youthful heroine, Miss Kimball abandoned the project and will be seen as some other kind of a heroine, possibly on Broadway.

"When we were rehearsing 'The Prisoner of Zenda,'" said Miss Kimball last week, "Mr. Hope took an awful lot of time and labor to impress upon me the absolute nobility of the Princess Flavia, her stately manner, her royal carriage, and above all the dignity of her love for Rudolph Rassendyl.

"I wish that I could remember now all the enthusiastic eulogies he pronounced over Flavia, who at that time was his best loved heroine. I remember that he preferred to have her move as little as possible upon the stage because he believed that movement detracted somewhat from her imperious and commanding manner. Even in the love scenes with Mr. Sothern he didn't wish Flavia to look straight into the eyes of Rudolph.

"I wonder if he has changed his mind since then, now that he has a real Flavia to make love to himself? When I recall his numerous directions and ideas concerning his ideal stage heroine, I find myself wondering if he realized them all in the nervous Mrs. Hawkins."

Dramatizing Dickens.

Charles Hawtrey's Suggestion Has Evidently Found Support.

The works of Charles Dickens are evidently in high favor at present with the adapter. At the Grand, Islington, several examples of plays founded on the great English novelist's stories have lately been seen. And now the Adelphi, in London, is about to be pressed into the same service.

Some months ago it was mentioned that a "Charles Dickens' Syndicate" was in process of formation. To that definite shape has at length been given. Its organizers are mainly actors, and at the head of the little band stand Charles Cartwright, Harry Nichols, Frank Cooper, and T. Gideon Warren.

With William Greet they have concluded arrangements to start proceedings at the Adelphi on August bank holiday, their first essay being a stage version of Mr. Warren and Ben Landeck of "David Copperfield." In that Mr. Cartwright will appear as Dan'l Peggotty, Mr. Nichols as Micawber, Mr. Cooper as Ham, and Miss Lessing, who for the nonce deserts musical comedy for drama, as Little Em'ly. Negotiations are also on foot to secure Robert Pateman for the role of Uriah Heep.

It will be like old times come again to find Mr. Cartwright and Mr. Nichols on the boards of the Adelphi, where, if tradition counts for anything, they are sure of a hearty welcome. Adaptations of three other novels by Dickens are also in readiness.

When Charles Hawtry was last in America he suggested what a mine of unworked material there was in Dickens. It looks as if others think so, too. Most of the old adaptations of Dickens will not pass muster with modern audiences, but there seems no reason to doubt that with proper handling good results may follow.

Irving and Sardou's "Dante."

Doubt as to the Dramatic Force of the Presentation.

It does not tax the imagination greatly to conjure up a vision of Victorien Sardou at Marly summoning to him the devoted Moreau and saying: "Voyons, mon cher! Henri Irving, the Englishman, you know—the man who bought my 'Robespierre'—Ah, how glad I am Paris has not yet seen it—wishes a new play, a long one. In it he must have a part that will exhibit him at all points; he must be Mathias and Benedick, Hamlet and Macbeth, a Becket and Don Quixote, Mephistopheles and, and—Robespierre. Every trick of feature, gesture, intonation must we put into this new play, which will sum up as in a magic mirror the complete professional career of Henri. He is no longer young, no longer spry, and he would make money—enfin, mon cher Moreau, what have we in our desk?"

Then the faithful collaborator searches. Sardou has been a busy man, much may be expected in the way of sketches, fragments, hints, suggestions, memoranda. Perhaps a play on the theme of Cromwell—bah! that egotistic Victor Hugo did something of the kind, didn't he? Anyhow, an ecclesiastic is wanted. Would Luther—? No. Sir Henri is not stout enough. Pascal, Chaucer, Richard Mansfield, George Washington — the Delaware episode would be immense—Buddha, Mahomet, Boulanger, Bismarck, even Disraeli, or say Swift? Dante! cries Moreau triumphantly. The profile, the fatal profile! Here is a pattern that will fit Irving like paper on the theater wall. So the fires are lighted, the machinery whizzes and in due course of time Sir Henri gets his play, an extraordinary concoction, ranging in form from the Eddas to a Christmas pantomime. "Dante" might be called a bad historical melodrama, though it is much more than that.

Warranted to Suit.

Knowing his public, also knowing that Paris would flout and scout such an amorphous, undramatic mess, Sardou issued a pronunciamento that his was not the historical Dante, nor yet a theatrical Dante; but "the moral Dante."

As a press agent's catch word, "the moral Dante" is good, very good. The phrase baited for the English market has been eagerly swallowed. Drury Lane is nightly thronged. Special matinees are given, and country curates, in company with maiden aunts, may be seen at every performance. The play is a pulpit theme. Articles appear in reviews and "Constant Reader" writes to editors on debatable points.

No wonder! Never on sea and land has such a muddled story been enacted before the footlights. It has good points, however. You can go in early, go in late, leave at the beginning of an act or vanish at the end, and you will know as much as the man who glues himself in his stall four weary hours.

There is food in Sardou's "Dante" for every manner of mental appetite—except for the unfortunate who hankers after logic relevancy, proportion and characterization. There are tableaux for the feeble-minded, who, like the poor, are with us always in the theater; there are vague passages executed in semi-darkness, vague phrases murmured and mumbled—for Sir Henry is on the stage nearly all the time—near stained glass windows, with swords and muffled oaths, hell fire and hate lurking in the gloom; for the mystically disposed there are pictures and Irvingesque poses, very effective, in which the great Florentine exile gazes simply at his daughter, or